

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE January 11, 2001
CONTACT: Mark Daley (202) 225-5235

"What is a Blue Dog?"

By Congressman Allen Boyd

Co-Chair Blue Dog Coalition

The [Blue Dog Coalition](#) was established in 1994 as a policy-oriented group which offers moderate and conservative Democrats a collective, common sense voice within the Congress. Most agree that, since then, we have been successful in our efforts to inject a moderate viewpoint into the House Democratic Caucus. Despite our southern roots, the group's membership spans the United States consisting of 32 members that hail from 18 states. This diverse group of men and women work together to promote legislation that is fiscally prudent and within the framework of a balanced budget.

Taking into account the narrow margins in the House of Representatives for the 107th Congress, there is no doubt the Blue Dog Coalition will play a crucial role in the passage of key legislation. The Coalition's two other Co-Chairs and I have already met with Speaker Hastert and Minority Leader Gephardt in an attempt to formulate a framework for the parties to work during the upcoming session. The Coalition recognizes the need for both parties to be present and active at the beginning and throughout the legislative process. In my experience, good ideas come from both sides of the aisle and everyone should be given the opportunity to provide substantive input for legislative proposals.

The Blue Dogs feel that the slim margins separating control of both the House and Senate reflect the true desire of the American people to govern from the "radical" middle. The goal of the Blue Dog Coalition is to bridge the gap between ideological extremes and return common sense to Congress. Many of our policy proposals have been praised as fair, responsible, and positive additions to a Congressional environment too often marked as partisan and antagonistic.

The groups membership has continued to grow with each new Congress. The 107th Congress will host the largest number of Blue Dogs since our creation. The elections of 2000 gave the Blue Dogs five additional members. With two retirements and a loss in one of the nation's

tightest races, the coalition experienced a net gain of two seats. With the inclusion of the new Blue Dog members, the Democratic party was able to gain one additional seat in the House. This further underscores my earlier point that the American populace is mandating governance from the middle.

Our Coalition's ability to promote bipartisan cooperation within Congress is clearly one of our most valuable characteristics. In fact, last year's Coalition budget proposal was the only such plan to receive significant support from both Republicans and Democrats. In addition, it won the endorsement of multiple newspaper and magazine editorials as well as the nonpartisan Concord Coalition. As one of our favorite endorsements tells, the Blue Dogs have proven that "common sense, conservative economics and compassion aren't necessarily mutually exclusive." The Blue Dog initiative, which ultimately failed, received 138 Democratic votes and 33 Republican votes, more bipartisan support than any other budget proposal.

In the next Congress, the Blue Dogs have set forth an agenda which includes ten task-forces, as far ranging as Healthcare to Energy, and Campaign Finance to Transportation. It is our goal to work with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, to overcome partisan differences, and put forth bills that both political parties can agree on. The Blue Dogs will assume the role of consensus builders within the 107th Congress. We will attempt to bring all of these interests to one table and broker a final product that carefully reflects the interests of both parties. Too often during the 106th Congress we saw policy that was crafted to provide political coverage in an election year. The political posturing must come to an end and I challenge the leaders of the Republican majority and President-elect Bush to work with the Democrats to find areas that we can all agree upon and accomplish more than just a partisan stalemate. There is an old saying in North Florida that we use to describe this frustrating state of gridlock, "that dog won't hunt."

If my colleagues are sincere in their pledge to work with one another they will join the Blue Dogs in pursuit of legislation that is a victory for both sides, and more importantly, the American people.